



Slow Food on the Common Agricultural Policy post-2020

Note to the consultation on "Modernizing and simplifying the CAP": Slow Food welcomes the consultation as a tool of dialogue, but regrets that the questionnaire is biased and often includes questions demanding a tradeoff between essential elements (e.g. questions 4 and 6). Please refer to this document for a comprehensive input to the consultation.

1. Introduction: from the Common Agricultural Policy to a Common Food Policy

It is high time Europe moves from a common agricultural policy to a common food policy. Food systems can be the entry point for a new social and economic vision for Europe.

The best way to secure the economic future is to strengthen the patchwork of sustainable small-scale farms and diverse landscapes. These are Europe's first line of defense against environmental degradation and the foundation of its tourism industry. Diversified agroecological systems must be embraced as the true "green economy". They use natural diversity and the synergies between different crops and species to foster healthy agro-ecosystems, while stimulating social relationships that help sustain rural economies and secure livelihoods.

The future of food and farming in Europe must be rooted in the wealth of its agrobiodiversity. Native varieties and breeds are well-adapted to the specific environmental conditions of their area, thus are hardier than most 'standard' landraces and resistant to environmental stresses. They are key elements in any climate change resilience strategy. Their potential to thrive in their original territories makes them important agricultural resources and essential tools for food sovereignty, particularly so in marginal areas, where they allow an efficient and resilient use of the fragile and limited ecological resources.

This biological heritage is also a cultural heritage, at the root of the diversity of European food products: a diversity that can unleash the potential of local territories, increase producers' income and enhance local tourism. Agricultural diversity can also be translated into dietary diversity by taking steps to reconnect local suppliers with individual consumers and institutional purchasers.

A Common Food Policy should help facilitate the transition to diversified agroecological food systems, ensuring coherence and synergies between disparate initiatives and measures and building around what is already working at different levels of governance.

2. Key objective: from increasing production to achieving sustainable food systems

When it first entered into force in 1962, the CAP's primary aim was to ensure enough food to meet the needs of all citizens and food security within Community boundaries. The food system designed then aimed to increase production through the industrialization of the agricultural sector. While it has provided large volumes of food commodities and reduced food insecurity in Europe, the logic of industrialization underpinning it has led to significant environmental, economic, and social costs.¹

Today, the goal to increase production continues to be promoted, with the justification that by 2050 the world population will reach 9 billion and the challenge is to "feed the world". However, this is a deceiving argument. Firstly, 1/3 of the food produced worldwide is lost or wasted. This is a clear indicator that the challenge is not to increase food production, but to guarantee a fair access to resources (land, seeds,

¹ See the data reported [here](#)

water) and fair access to food. Secondly, strengthening domestic food production in the Global South is recognized development policy, confirmed in the Sustainable Development Goals. Aggressive export strategies and the unfair dumping of subsidized EU food go in the opposite direction: they hinder the development of local supply chains, drive out local producers and interfere with local diets.

Today, the challenge is to ensure the sustainability of the European food systems whilst fulfilling the international commitments of the Paris agreement and of the Sustainable Development Goals. Tweaking practices will not provide long-term solutions. What Europe needs are diversified agroecological food systems, based on farming agro-biodiversity, with lower dependency on external inputs, stimulating social relationships and short-supply chains, to build long-term healthy agro-ecosystems and secure livelihoods.

3. What a Common Food Policy should do

At the European level, there is a need to analyse and regulate the food system with a comprehensive and coherent approach. Currently, issues relating to the food system are largely regulated by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), while other measures that strongly influence the food system are regulated separately, with contradicting results.

Over the last years, multiple actors (civil society, policy-makers, researchers) have come together with the goal of integrating policy processes and developing coherent food policies. These diverse initiatives need a common framework at EU level, while existing EU policy tools need to be realigned and harmonised in order to deliver sustainable food systems. These food systems are:

- Environmentally sustainable: they maintain the quality and renewability of natural resources over time, preserve biodiversity and guarantee the integrity of ecosystems.
- Economically sustainable: they generate long-term income and workplaces, and provide a competitive environment, where quality prevails over quantity and prices reflect the true value of food.
- Socio-culturally sustainable: they guarantee fair access to fundamental rights (safety, health, education, etc.) and conditions of well-being (e.g. social relations), provide opportunities to create and develop relations between different actors of the food system, and recognize the cultural value of food.

A Common Food Policy should integrate the distinct policy processes affecting food systems and achieve the objective of delivering sustainable food systems as follows.

3.1 Restore the value of food - redefine quality food

In the current food system, food—and the values and rights related to it—has become a commodity whose value is expressed exclusively by its price. Treating food as a mere commodity implies stripping it of its social and cultural value. Food is inextricably linked to our cultures, to our individual and collective histories, and to our identity. It embeds precious knowledge, from the fields to the kitchen, passed on through the centuries. In this context, quality food must be:

- 1) Good. A food's flavor and aroma is the fruit of the competence of the producer and of choice of raw materials and production methods, which should in no way alter its naturalness.
- 2) Clean. The environment has to be respected and agroecological practices of farming, animal husbandry, processing, marketing and consumption should be taken into consideration. Every stage in the food system, consumption included, should protect ecosystems and biodiversity, safeguarding the health of the consumer and the producer.
- 3) Fair. Social justice should be pursued through the creation of conditions of labor respectful of people and their rights, capable of generating adequate rewards; through the pursuit of balanced global economies; through the practice of solidarity; through respect for cultural diversities and traditions.

3.2 Respect Food Sovereignty

As the Nyélény declaration states, "food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define

their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users."²

3.3 Promote small- and medium-scale productions

There is strong evidence that smaller holdings are more labor-intensive than larger ones. Smallholdings provide a precious source of employment and can help local economies thrive. The revival of the European economy also depends on the reappraisal of employment in the agrifood sector.

The transition toward sustainable food systems requires that the whole system rotating round agrifood production—from credit access to the development of agricultural machinery, from academic research to the building of infrastructure—be scaled to the needs that are characteristic of sustainable small- and medium- scale productions.

3.4 Promote diversified agroecological food systems

Small- and medium-scale production is not, in itself, a guarantee of sustainability. Nonetheless, agroecological practices are best adapted to small and medium-scale dwellings. Agroecology is based on the use of traditional and modern techniques most suited to local soil and climate conditions, characterized by effective natural resource management, knowledge of local agriculture, the exclusion of genetically modified organisms, monocultures and intensive breeding, the reduction or abolition of synthetic chemical products, the protection of the agricultural landscape and social equity.

3.5 Promote agro-biodiversity

As mentioned above, native varieties and breeds have the potential to thrive in their original territories and are key to food sovereignty and local development. It is fundamental to widely and clearly acknowledge the role of agroecological farmers as guardians of biodiversity and landscapes. Besides genetic diversity, the wealth of knowledge, habits and customs that have allowed the survival of biodiversity over time must also be acknowledged.

The role of agroecological farmers is particularly important in marginal areas, such as high-altitude hills and mountains: they play a vital role in stewarding the territory, provide an essential and irreplaceable service and have to be supported accordingly.

3.6 Promote local food systems

Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees fair incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. Priority must be given to local and regional food chains, whilst encouraging the development of local food systems also in the Global South.

Sustainability requires that the food produced travels only a few "food miles"; a physical proximity exists between producer and consumer; and the local economy benefits from the added value inherent to the local product. Ensuring the above helps reduce the impact on the environment, makes fresh, seasonal produce available and weaves a new fabric of relations between rural and urban areas. To build local agrifood systems it is crucial to build networks of exchange, knowledge and solidarity among farmers, retailers, rural and urban dwellers. Food should be excluded from EU competition law and from international trade agreements.

4. Suggestions on concrete measures

² Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007 ([link](#))

4.1 Public money for public goods

1. Public money must be spent only for public goods. Food and farming systems that harm the environment, contribute to food waste and disrespect the wellbeing of workers and animals should not receive subsidies. Only agroecological farming systems producing food for human and animal consumption and contributing to the socio-economic and environmental sustainability of their farms and regions should receive financial support.
2. Payments should not be given on a hectare basis: this contributes to ever larger farms, reducing the possibility for small-scale farmers to enter the market.
3. Support schemes should prioritize quality over quantity.
4. Reorient support away from chemical-intensive monocultures and toward diversified agroecological systems.
5. Reward producers who cultivate and farm agrobiodiversity, who preserve the traditional agricultural landscape (e.g. old vineyards), know-how (e.g. milling and slaughtering) and architecture (water mills, mountain dairies, old wood ovens etc.), who work in marginal areas, who create associations and cooperatives.
6. Reward those who differentiate supply by supplementing agricultural production with educational, cultural, social and tourist activities to promote knowledge of the environment, local areas and agriculture (multifunctional role of farms).
7. Develop mechanisms so that prices reflect the true cost of food.

4.2 Fair land management

1. Guarantee mechanisms that allow new farmers to access land, in particular for young people
2. Guarantee access to state-owned land and rental agreements that allow medium-long term planning - especially for pastures.
3. Boost transparency in land purchasing deals and international investments in the land market, in order to counteract the phenomena of land grabbing and land concentration. Provide legal protection to farmers during acquisition processes.

4.3 Commensurate bureaucratic workload and clarity of information

1. Readjust the bureaucratic workload so that it is commensurate with the reality of the dwelling.
2. Guarantee clarity and ease of access to information on criteria for accessing Rural Development Funds and other support measures.
3. Provide clear information and simplify the prerequisites for the starting up of new businesses and the red-tape necessary for their management.

4.4 Training and technical support

1. Envisage strong incentives, technical advice, transfer of agricultural know-how, training and support to encourage farmers to convert their farms into agroecological food businesses, optimize processing techniques and use new technologies.
2. Support the organization of producer groups.
3. Provide training in business management and marketing (labelling, eco-sustainable packaging etc.).
4. Stimulate entrepreneurship by supplying knowledge and (co-)funding for tools that help farmers to add value to their produce.

4.5 Support marginal areas

1. Define "marginal areas" through participatory processes and taking into account all factors that determine a lower capacity to reach consumers, for social, organizational, logistical, environmental and other reasons.
2. Envisage greater support for agroecological small and medium producers in marginal areas with

specific support for the strengthening of collaboration between value chain actors.

3. Develop support measures for the efficient management of wild and semi-wild resources (e.g. pastures), like e.g. the promotion of associations for common management and for the requalification of land.
4. Envisage effective infrastructural recovery and development plans in rural and deprived areas, ensuring Internet coverage in particular, through participatory processes of local development, as for instance through the Strategy for Internal Areas in Italy.

4.6 Fair food systems chains and citizens' awareness

1. Fight the exploitation of the labor force, which often concerns migrant workers.
2. Review the rules that regulate the supply chain to give all producers fair bargaining power.
3. Create market channels for small- and medium-scale products; promote farmers' markets, fair trade and alternative food networks based on direct selling.
4. Promote the use of local agroecological products in public canteens.
5. Promote environmental and food education in schools, setting up school gardens by way of an example. Support awareness-raising activities on the sustainability of the food system.

4.7 Review quality schemes and hygiene rules

1. Review the structure of denominations of origin, including rigorous criteria of sustainability, quality, links with the land, historicity and biodiversity protection.
2. Introduce training for food inspectors, vets, food hygiene authorities on traditional productions of artisanal foods, to ensure a tailored approach to different production systems.
3. Include clear and obligatory provisions for flexibility in legislative proposals on hygiene rules, guaranteeing simplified and proportionate rules for small producers and local food chains.
4. Where competent authorities are not willing to take the responsibility for hygiene rules tailored for small producers and local food chains, they can use a disclaimer "Local food product. Safety guaranteed by producer, not by the State".

4.8 Support young people

1. Ensure young people have a decent income (for example, through direct supplementary payment or tax relief) so that they can have enough security to plan their future.
2. Promote the creation of networks of young people – farmers but also other actors in the food supply chain, such as food artisans, restaurateurs, educators and consumers – by creating spaces and opportunities and tools for connection (events, the Internet, social networks etc.) to avoid the isolation that often characterizes farming work and discourages young people.
3. Promote the training of young farmers and young entrepreneurs in the food system on agroecological farming and sustainable food systems, with secondary school and university courses, short courses, lecture courses by farmers themselves and knowledge exchange.
4. Promote knowledge transfer from generation to generation.
5. Facilitate the setting up of new businesses by young people by simplifying or speeding up red-tape and envisaging incentives such as direct funding, tax relief, favorable insurance schemes etc.

4.9 A democratic governance of the food system

1. Create spaces to develop a European Common Food Policy through participatory processes involving decision makers, actors of the food system, civil society and researchers.
2. Ensure policy coherence across sectors (agriculture, environment, employment...) and across governance levels (European, national, local).
3. At Commission level, set up a cross-sectorial taskforce for food and environment, in order to develop a Common Food Policy and break the silos surrounding the CAP.
4. Build around what is already working at different governance levels, e.g. "food policy councils" at

municipal level.

5. Avoid concentration of power in the food system in the hands of a few multinationals

5. Good Food, Good Farming - Now!

We are committed to achieving a real transition by working in partnership with farmers, citizens and policy-makers. Slow Food, together with over 150 civil society organizations, is calling for change.